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THE
CRITERION:

O R,
DISQUISITIONS

ON THE
Present Administration.

ADDRESSED TO
SIR GEORGE SAVILLE, Bart.
Non Sibi, sed Patriæ natus.

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS, Esq;
Author of the CONSIDERATIONS on the AMERICAN WAR.

*Rara temporum felicitate,
Ubi sentire quæ velis,
Et quæ sentias dicere licet.*

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SIR GEORGE SAVILLE, Bart.

HAVING five years ago received a letter from you, so full of benevolence, makes me acquainted with the goodness of your heart; and, bold in addressing you in this public manner, I shall make no other apology than saying, that I am an unprofitable labourer in the same vineyard.

There is no one better entitled to the attention of the public than you are; unplaced, unpensioned, unpeculating as the tenor of your whole life has been. To enter into the examination of the present times, of your own friends, perhaps of your own sentiments; and fairly to lay them open to the strictures of the public, before the political mass is fairly shaped and formed into symmetry, may be premature: yet under no dread of the violent crisis of the times, I am bold

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to think you will not shrink from the enquiry, nor suffer your attachment to your friends, party zeal, nor political influence, to warp your candour or your judgment.

That a secret influence directed the cabinet, that the increasing power of the Crown, was inimical to the Constitution, it seems was the sense of the representatives of the nation assembled in parliament, as likewise the sense of associations meeting in all parts of the kingdom. Yet who, or what that Secret Influence was, does not appear to be found out; it remains hid. The late ministers, when called upon, incontinently threw the ostensible part on the King; and possibly the King, to save his ministers, submitted to the indecent charge. Lord North declared he was answerable only for his own department; and by multiplying the streams of ostensibility, threw a veil over the Secret Influence as the ancient philosophers did over the head of the Nile.

That *the King can do no wrong* is a political maxim of the constitution, which means that whatever miscarriage in state-affairs may happen, the minister shall be answerable for it. Give me leave, Sir George, to examine the charges laid at the last ministers' doors. In their hands the greatest power in the world has been reduced to impotence, and yet they escape scrutiny and censure:—in their hands, all the supplies and wealth of the empire has been converted to indigence, distress and embarrassment; and yet they escape!—They who have sullied our national honour, ruined our commerce, lost half the empire, and reduced individuals to feel their ruin keep pace with the public calamity, with all the sins imputed to them, shall they escape?

Why

Why this enquiry concerning the mismanagement in the East-Indies in parliament? The court of justice is open to the Company. The constitution of this empire does not depend upon the speculation of merchants: it is a barrel thrown to the whale to divert the attention of the nation from the speculation of ministers. Where is the enquiry to the cause of our American dispute? Has Mr. Gage been yet examined? has General Sir William Howe described the situation he found America in? its temper, complaints? told parliament whether defection was owing to acts of oppression, or to the poor, weak, temporizing spirit preceding his command? Has the conduct of Lords Hillsborough and Barrington been investigated? These are enquiries worthy the attention of parliament, and objects of national justice. However unwilling his Majesty was to grant independence, and to dismember his empire, he certainly is blameless from any cause of occasioning the war.

Has there been no mismanagement in the treasury? no speculation in the navy, in the army, the pay-office, in secret services, in contracts? no naval, military or ministerial orders prejudicial to the welfare of the state? no instances where the laws of the land has been made free with? where innovations of power have decided more than *secundum morem*—the custom of the land? no criminality, which the King's name did not sanctify? Certainly the ministry turned out have been injured, or the kingdom has been injured in turning them out. Nothing will convince the nation to the contrary, unless the Secret Influence is pursued to punishment, if the misfortunes of this kingdom are owing to such influence.

This last job, which is now looked upon by the kingdom as a job, will be worse than any jobs or contracts so heavily, so feelingly complained

plained of. These ten years past the great leading men in the kingdom have been opposing each other; one side opposing, at all hazards, right or wrong, what the other had projected: And, if it will now appear that they have come to accommodation, the Outs must have their turn; and the late Ins purchase indemnification by making no opposition. In this light will the violent crisis appear, not only in our own eyes, but (fairly scrutinized) in the eyes of all the world.

Neither did these lose all their virtue, lest bad men should boast. Economical reformation, Sir George, was the ground-work of the new administration: it has served as *sal volatile* to the Public, and new life has commenced from the date of their promises; yet surely in forcing the King to submit at discretion, they have overstepped the bounds of modesty, overstepped the modesty of Patriotism; and in forming an administration on the broad-bottomed base of Democratic Government, the moderation of YOUR FRIEND was lost in ambition, and sunk in the schemes of designing men. You, Sir George, have felt, and will feel for the constitution. These heterogeneous uncoalised powers have concluded, that the constitution was not safe nor secure against the Throne, without depriving it of every power, and barely leaving it the insignias of sovereignty. Sir George, to attack the splendor of majesty, the appendages of sovereignty, the regalias of the Crown, is the production of Republican Principles. If the honourable posts about the throne give influence, and have a dangerous tendency, take away their voices from the senate, but lessen not the splendor of Majesty before the people: it is the brightest gem in the constitution; it is holding the King and Kingdom in shackles. You, Sir George, and every feeling man in the empire will feel for affronted Majesty.

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The proscription by Anthony, Cæsar, and Lepidus was not more general than the plan of these immaculate leaders, nor more partially adhered to.—They turn out indiscriminately : nor family, fortune, nor character regarded. There certainly were some honest men whose integrity was equal to their trust. In filling up places, party zeal seems to be the barometer of abilities, and makes up the test of merit ; and it will soon appear, that partial influence, so much complained of to the Scotch, will be succeeded by a deluge, whose dialect will not be more grateful to the ear.

The character, Sir George, of your friend hangs on a slender thread. The patriot, the moderate, the good Lord ———, now having the noblest opportunities of exercising every benevolent quality, is practising the courtly etiquette ; and it was pronounced at his second levee, that the Duke of Newcastle is outdone in squeezing the hand and the address courteous.

The new administration should take care, Sir George, not to show a greater regard for their reputation than their integrity. Much is expected from the latter ; perhaps more than human foresight and resolution can accomplish. There is a dignity of state, a solemn obligation, that the heads of each department should be men of the first families, and first properties in the kingdom. The nation requires such a security ; it strengthens the nerves of Government. Public offices should likewise be filled with men of respectability as well as responsibility ; otherwise gentlemen of honour and character will forego justice to themselves and to the Public, rather than degrade themselves by application through channels fostered into inadequate situations. The kingdom is not satisfied with present appointments. Don Quixote's Sancho said his master should be governor,

and he would be secretary *over him*; how many Quixotes have we at present, whose Sanchos are secretaries over them?

Sir George, I will under your sanction observe, that young noblemen should not be poisoned with the pride of too early and precipitate honours, or put into offices where national business requires maturity of years and experience. This is no stricture of mine; but handed down by ancient wisdom; and I am free to use the application.

That, retrenchment in public expences, an economy in public offices, will be of infinite availment in our present state of bankruptcy, all must acknowledge. Such an accomplishment the late ministers could not arrange: if plunged in the sink of corruption, it would be the highest ingratitude to destroy what was their chief support. The controul of parliament in their reign was absolutely necessary: it will be decent at present to make it the act of the Crown; but decency of conduct to the Crown has not been the taste of the times. How has the King been arraigned by inflammatory declamations by certain men when out of place? and the instant they have possession of him, the flowers of oratory have been profuse in adorning his character. What a mockery of Majesty! what an imposition on the sense of the country! The odours from such flowers are certainly unfavoury to the senses.

Still I insist, to free the present administration from suspicions of collusion with the last: some example, some enquiry is expected from them; unless they think that their degradation is a loadstone, a sting of death; and that they must feel as Cane did, against whom there
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was no law to punish murder, yet expected to be put to death by every member of the community that they met.

The *integer vitæ scelerisque purus* will scarcely be found in the breast of a modern minister, at least allowed. Envy is the constant attendant on power, as hatred is of envy. There will be great merit, great essential service to the country, if the stipend, the salary of office will content, when rapine and peculation offer their alluring temptations: indigence should not be exposed to such temptations; but I see no great merit in a man who has not one hundred pounds a-year, to be satisfied with ten thousand a-year. It is upon this ground that I stand up for the true dignity of state.

I hope to hear no more of *the Man of the People*. I am persuaded, Sir George, you disapprove of such violence: it is a ladder raised against the structure of this constitution that may endanger the edifice. Sir George Saville will think there is as much patriotism in supporting the honour, dignity, and proper influence of the Crown as any other branch of the constitution; and we expect from his moderation, principles, and true love for the constitution, a guardianship to all its branches.

I have already, in my *Considerations on the American War*, firmly opposed acknowledging the independency of America: it is a point of too great a magnitude for ministers to determine; a sense of the nation has not been taken upon it; and I would have gentlemen weigh it well in the scale of politics: for it is a question of politics which must be understood, to understand the nature of the question, more than temporary expediency or appearance even of justice. Let
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the minister give notice of the question or motion, and leave every mind to act for itself—without influence or declamation. I am not fond of declamation on constitutional points: it oftner misleads the judgment, than confirms by argument.—The motion before the House should be,

“ If, in treating with America, for the purpose of putting an end to the devastations of war, we treat with them as a state Independent of the controul of this Realm?”

The advocates for American independency, I am persuaded, will proclaim an absurdity on the face of the motion; and that to treat with them, is to grant them independence: And they will say, that to offer terms to them as rebels would be ridiculous, as they have beat us out of the field; and that we have no controul over them. The time of reconciliation and compromise is past; allowing this inference and conclusion. Let then the motion and word *Independence* rest on this question, “ Is it the sense of this nation that there should be a separation between this kingdom and America and the Western Islands, which will be included?” There is all the force of Dean Tucker’s argument on one side: they have the fate of the empire on the other.

I have revised my plan of operation in my *Considerations on the American War*, and see the necessity of it in its full force, founded upon cool reflection. If I attend to my own foresight, it tells me, that the French, as they have been our bane in this business, will likewise prove our antidote, if we give them leave: and if we pursue

due a steady uniform plan of conduct in a particular line, we shall still rise with superior lustre; and in this idea I am full of confidence.

Yet should a peace be the determination of our great statesmen, and that event should take place, I will hazard this public caution to the ministers, whoever they may be; That they do not pacifically give up more, than continued hostilities and ill success would take from us. As the new administration have made the kingdom expect a peace by their means, I have fears lest a reconciliation will be purchased at the expence of concessions to the abasement of the honour and interest of this realm. They have pledged themselves to the nation to obtain a peace; and it is on this occasion that I dread their concern for their reputation in patching up a peace will be greater than their concern for their integrity, in a faithful discharge of their trust.

That the present administration will tread in the steps of the last, and indeed of all other administrations, I clearly foresee. Government is a trade, whose success depends on adherents to party, recommendation of Influence, and attention to the independent part of the kingdom: these must be all exercised to the great point of securing their places. Sir George Saville will still remain the same; the friend to his country, and its constitution—I will pronounce, the friend to his King in the worst of times. King John had a conference with his barons at Runnymede, in arms; was allowed no terms, but obliged to submit at discretion; and had twenty-five barons appointed conservators of the peace. I hope, Sir George, neither our King, his conduct, nor the times, bear any analogy to King John or his barons: and yet it bears hard on reflection and feeling to think of the violent crisis which has lately taken place, without criminality and punishment.

Permit me, Sir George, to say a few words on the situation of the American Loyalists.—On the commencement of the dispute, the moderate and most respectable part of the Americans were averse to the defection: some, from the necessity and situation of their affairs, were obliged to join in the violence; whilst the most respectable embarked for England, to consult with ministers, and retire from the carnage of a civil war. The violent proceedings that ensued, confiscated their properties, threw them on the ministers for subsistence, and exposed them to the horrors of such a situation, unforeseen and unmerited: They are now considered by the kingdom in general as a burden, and styled by the grating epithet of *Refugees*. Shameful contumely, and very unfair distinction! Where is the humanity of Britons? where that hospitality that was the characteristic of this island? where that generosity which is the pride of human nature? Depraved, degenerated Englishmen! Has the faction of the land absorbed all the feelings of the heart? who, that has crossed the Atlantic in the public cause, has not shared their festive board? What alleviation, what softening of the rigour of distress do they now meet with? I fear none. For I see, patient, suffering merit, meet with the scowl of power and pride; and malignant opinion trample on the soul of sorrow. Had the loyalists considered the history of Ireland, they would have read in the siege of Limerick, a memorable and melancholly lesson—that the loyalists, who came in by the early invitation of Government, fared worse than the rebels who held out, and made their terms sword in hand. These unfortunate, tho' not less worthy men, have yet a resource left, which if pursued will fill this Government with disappointment and disgrace, and make us feel, too late, the pride of national honour humbled in the eye of Christendom.—Give me leave, Sir George, to recommend them to your protection and patronage.

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To weed corruption from the seeds of good government, whether it is a palliative to disguise ambition, or proceeding from rigid virtue and purity of intention, demands the grateful approbation and support of every man in the kingdom; but as we know, that in politics as well as in love, the easiest way to please is to deceive; and that as power is not confined to despotism, I wish and I hope, that, jealous circumspection will never slumber.

Parliament has undertaken the great work of reformation and corruption. The Ægean stable swallows up abuses in the mansion where the labour should first begin. The foundation-stone of parliament is Qualification of Members—it is the essence of the constitution: and how shall I remark, Sir George, that in this first grand point, prevarication veils the seat of perjury—wilful perjury: in this, the hunters of corruption are most corrupt; and power is usurped to vindicate the subversion of law. I call upon the administration to bring qualifications home to the letter of the law—I call upon the constituents of the parliament, and the public spirit of Liberty, if it is not extinct—and I call upon you, Sir George Saville, to make the motion to purge the house of parliament, by the *bona fide* test of Qualification.

The unequal representation of the people calls for the wisest consideration, in the annihilation or reform of boroughs. Twenty-four voters have the nominal constitute of Sir George Warren as a member; he represents them with the same power that Westminster, with ten thousand voters, can claim from their representative. Where is the justice, equality, or decency of such disparity? Five years ago it was in contemplation to alter the constitution as far as affected representation—that ten pounds a-year should be the standard for constituents.

constituents. On the other hand, there are advocates who stand up for the whole *comitia* of the people—that the labourer is taxed as well as the freeholder in his farm, cottage, food and raiment. If it is in human wisdom, some line should be drawn. The present standard, in my opinion, comes near it, representation of boroughs excepted.

The liberty of this country is a Colossus standing on two pedestals—one, the freedom of the mind in talking, and delivering opinion;—the other, of disposing of property, and being taxed with consent. These principles of liberty and government are free from mystery, within the comprehension of common sense and plain language, and not at the caprice of power and opulence.—The distinction of political liberty and civil liberty is as plain: political liberty affects the whole mass, great and little: civil liberty is the conduct of society. The public spirit of liberty belongs to the former:—the associations in the different counties, and the declamations of Mr. Fox to his constituents, breathe the spirit of oligarchy more than the public spirit of liberty. This great distinction is explained in a very masterly manner in a pamphlet published this last week, entitled, *Letters on Political Liberty*; which every man in England, who can read, should carefully peruse.

I am sorry, Sir George, to observe, that we have no enterprising operation carrying on, no genius in planning diversions against the Dutch. We have given them uninterrupted time to form a respectable fleet, and allowed them to rock us in a lullaby-cradle of stupefaction and inaction; they are at our doors, and within offensive reach: something might have been done within this month past. The honey-moon of the new administration should be marked with gallantry

lantry and vigour; and naval tournaments on the Dutch coast might have celebrated the wedding by a blaze at the Texel, or some other part. It has been advanced, within a few days, in the House of Commons, that the principle of the Dutch war was unwise and unjust—a very impolitick assertion: easier it is to find fault, than to correct. To supply an enemy with arguments, is not a way to induce him to moderate measures, or bring forth the fruits of peace; especially when it is evident that we must bring them to terms by arms, and not by arguments.

Of all the accumulated errors of the last administration, none marks its character so much as its conduct to Ireland. The seeds of the American defection, Sir George, were sown before Lord Chatham's administration. When the Marquis of Rockingham was saddled with the repeal of the stamp-act, he received with his office a box of American papers of six years correspondence that had not been opened: I had the honour of this information from the Marquis. Can it then surprise, that from negligence, indolence, or ignorance, we should lose what we were not worthy or capable of keeping? As to our conduct to Ireland, it is of greater magnitude than the American cause, inasmuch as it is nearer home; the mortification being in a part that will not bear amputation without endangering the vitals. The physician is cautious of alarming his patient with a sense of his danger: Prudence forbids publicly to point out what the errors have been, as well as what the remedy ought to be. I know some of the popular leaders who, I think, have no bounds to their career. Lord North was outwitted by his dear Harry. The white wand, which charmed and overturned Sir William Meredith, had more magic than the whole treasury of Ireland could boast.

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I request

I request, Sir George, that you will consider these disquisitions as proceeding from conscious integrity, and not arrogance of spirit. In these times, every man should put his shoulder to the wheel, to help it out of the slough.

I have heard, that on the western coast of Ireland, when a vessel is seen in distress, the inhuman inhabitants tie a lantern with a candle round an old horse's neck, and fix him to graze on the most dangerous part, in order to shipwreck the vessel, which they soon plunder. Declamations, promises, arts of state, I look upon as false lights, held up to the country in a time of distress : of such I shall be watchful ; every man should be watchful. They will be easily known : they will shun men of virtue. They will first affect virtue ; if that will not do, they will ridicule virtue, and laugh at public spirit. When they have mounted by such a ladder, it will be some time before their possession is so secured, as to kick the ladder down. They will sacrifice colonies, sacrifice peace, sacrifice honour and integrity--to accomplish their domestic ends.

The great parts, abilities, natural and acquired merit, of Lord S-----e and Mr. B-----ke had the noblest field to exercise their genius on the Irish stage. To have settled that kingdom in peace and harmony with us, would have done them honour : They then might have challenged the first appointments in the State. It should have been the test : every idea would have joined in their future promotion ; whereas now, a long series of art and intrigue stamp their situations unprecedented, unmerited, and inadequate.

I have hitherto, Sir George, courted obscurity, and bore the contumacy of treachery, and treacherous arts. It is now the time for every man to step forth at the hazard of life and reputation.

F I N I S.

